

# EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

## REMARKS ON THE 114TH CONGRESS

### HON. GRACE MENG

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, December 30, 2016

Ms. MENG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the 114th Congress. To be honest, I feel we failed the American people at times. When calls were made for sensible gun reform after the Pulse nightclub tragedy, the majority in this body refused to listen. When the American people clamored for policy solutions that would mitigate the effects of climate change during the warmest year on record, the majority refused to listen. When workers demanded increased wages, seniors called for the protection of retirement security programs, and the poor simply asked to be treated with a bit more dignity in the face of assistance cuts, the majority failed to listen.

Despite these disappointments, however, there were opportunities for good that were seized. We recently passed the “21st Century Cures Act”, we shepherded through multi-year water resource development and surface transportation reauthorizations, we began to address the opioid epidemic, and we finally replaced “No Child Left Behind”. In each of these instances, there were opportunities for Members to improve these pieces of legislation, and I feel fortunate to have had several opportunities to do so successfully on behalf of my constituents. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to read into the RECORD some of the legislative achievements that were signed into law this Congress on behalf of the people of the Sixth Congressional District of New York:

(1) H.R. 4238, “To amend the Department of Energy Organization Act and the Local Public Works Capital Development and Investment Act of 1976 to modernize terms relating to minorities”, which struck the outdated and offensive term “Oriental” from the U.S. Code in each place it appeared referring to a person.

(2) Section 111 of H.R. 3700, the “Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016”, which requires the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to publish model guidelines for minimum heating requirements for public housing units. This effort originated in response to reports of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents receiving inadequate unit heating when outside temperatures were well below freezing.

(3) Section 5511 of H.R. 22, the “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act”, which requires a national review of existing federal and state rules covering the transportation of elementary and secondary school children on school buses, and mandates the creation of best practices for ensuring safe and reliable school bus transportation.

(4) Section 6025 of H.R. 22, the “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act”, which requires the U.S. Government and Accountability Office to publish a report detailing the

organizational readiness of the U.S. Department of Transportation to address autonomous vehicle technology challenges, including consumer privacy protections. This provision mirrors H.R. 3876, the “Autonomous Vehicle Privacy Protection Act of 2015”, which was the first federal legislation ever introduced dealing solely with autonomous (driverless) vehicle concerns.

(5) Section 24407 of H.R. 22, the “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act”, which requires improved data collection and reporting of child car seat performance during vehicle crashes, and a national study to be published on the topic within three years.

(6) Section 565 of S. 2943, the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017”, which reauthorized the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, an expiring suicide prevention and resilience program for members of the National Guard, Reserves, and their families.

(7) Section 1291(a) of S. 2943, the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017”, which authorizes the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State to enter into water resource agreements with foreign governments. Pursuant to this provision, the United States will be permitted to partner with nations such as Israel to research and develop initiatives that will ensure access to water for U.S. troops stationed in regions of the world that experience water scarcity, such as the Middle East.

(8) Section 5301(a) [Sec. 856. Art. 56. (b)(2)(F)] of S. 2943, the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017”, which makes conspiracy to commit rape or sexual assault an offense that requires dismissal or dishonorable discharge under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

(9) Section 1814(a) of S. 2943, the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017”, which requires the Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide annual training to the Defense Acquisition University, the Federal Acquisition Institute, and other federal entities regarding regulations altered by the SBA during the prior year that affect federal acquisition procedures. This provision of law mirrors H.R. 4337, the “Education for Contracting Personnel Improvement Act of 2016”.

(10) Section 1150 of S. 612, the “Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act”, which authorizes the Army Corps of Engineers to pursue projects and technologies that prevent and mitigate flood damage associated with ice jams.

(11) Section 704(a) of S. 1635, the “Department of State Authorities Act, Fiscal Year 2017”, which strengthens the Department of State’s Rewards for Justice Program by authorizing the Secretary of State to pay rewards to individuals who provide information about persons aiding or abetting war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and other criminal acts.

(12) Page 43 of House Report 114–497—“Female providers.” (Incorporated by ref-

erence into the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying H.R. 5325, the “Continuing Appropriations and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017, and Zika Response and Preparedness Act”). This provision urges the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs “to seek to hire more female health care professionals in order to provide female veterans greater opportunities to choose the gender of their healthcare provider.”

(13) Page 46 of House Report 114–497—“Medical opinions from non-VA health care providers.” (Incorporated by reference into the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying H.R. 5325, the “Continuing Appropriations and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017, and Zika Response and Preparedness Act”). This provision encourages the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) “to accept medical opinions from non-VA health care providers when the evidence is sufficient for rating purposes” in order to “conserve VA’s resources, enable faster rating decisions, and reduce the number of appeals.”

(14) Page 54 of House Report 114–497—“Placement of emblems of belief on headstones of unclaimed, deceased veterans.” (Incorporated by reference into the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying H.R. 5325, the “Continuing Appropriations and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017, and Zika Response and Preparedness Act”). This provision encourages the VA “to permit the placement of emblems of belief on headstones of unclaimed, deceased veterans if reliable . . . documentation of the veteran’s beliefs can be produced (such as through dog tags or other military identification documents).” This provision will make it possible for the Queens County American Legion to bury veterans who die without any living family in a manner consistent with the burial of other veterans.

(15) Page 56 of House Report 114–497—“Asian American representation on the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.” (Incorporated by reference into the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying H.R. 5325, the “Continuing Appropriations and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017, and Zika Response and Preparedness Act”). This provision encourages the VA “to consider appointing, in keeping with the demographic make-up of America’s veteran community, an additional Asian American to the Advisory Committee [on Minority Veterans] in the coming year.” This provision led to the appointment of Flushing, New York resident Fang Wong to the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans in August of 2016.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I would also like for my constituents to know that the following legislative items were passed through the U.S. House of Representatives in their name, and that I am committed to ensuring each of these items are signed into law during the 115th Congress:

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

(1) H.R. 2669, the “Anti-Spoofing Act of 2016”, which would make it illegal for scam artists to purposefully disguise telephone numbers displayed on caller ID, or over texts, in order to lure unsuspecting victims into answering the phone. This bill would significantly deter the rise in fraud being perpetrated by individuals claiming to represent a government agency, bank, hospital, or credit card company who then demand unwarranted payments over the phone.

(2) H.R. 4570, the “100 Years of Women in Congress Act”, which seeks to rename the Women and Minorities in STEM Fields Program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture the “Jeannette Rankin Women and Minorities in STEM Fields Program” in honor of the 100 year anniversary of the election of the first woman to Congress—Jeannette Rankin.

(3) Section 2(5) of H.R. 6303, “To designate facilities of the United States Postal Service, to establish new Zip Codes, and for other purposes,” which would designate a single, unique ZIP Code for Glendale, New York. This section stems from H.R. 657, “To direct the United States Postal Service to designate a single, unique ZIP Code for Glendale, New York”, an effort whose origins begin with former-Representative, and Vice Presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferraro almost 40 years ago.

(4) Amendment No. 63 to H.R. 5293, the “Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2017”, which would increase funding for the

Peer-Reviewed Cancer Research Program (PRCRP) by \$8 million. These additional funds would be used to combat bladder, brain, colorectal, liver, pancreatic and stomach cancers, as well as lymphoma, melanoma and other skin cancers, mesothelioma, and cancer in children, adolescents and young adults. Unfortunately, the federal government will instead be funded pursuant to a continuing resolution through the New Year.

(5) Amendment No. 117 to H.R. 5538, the “Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017”, which would increase funding for the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center (APAC) by \$300,000, tripling APAC’s federal funding. Unfortunately, again, the federal government will instead be funded pursuant to a continuing resolution through the New Year.

(6) Amendment No. 66 to H.R. 5485, the “Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act, 2017”, which would increase funding for Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) by \$5 million for a total funding amount of \$130 million, an amount sufficient to place a new SBDC assistance center in New York’s Sixth Congressional District. Again, unfortunately, the federal government will instead be funded pursuant to a continuing resolution through the New Year.

(7) Section 1259R of H.R. 4909, the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017”, which would renew for three years an expiring Iranian sanction that re-

quires monitoring and tracking of certain ships and airlines traveling to and from Iran.

(8) Section 568 of H.R. 4909, the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017”, which would require an independent U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on the admissions practices and gender composition of each U.S. service academy in order to ensure adequate female and minority representation (which would then directly translate into a more diverse officer corps in the U.S. military).

(9) Amendment No. 6 to H.R. 2406, the “Sportsmen’s Heritage and Recreational Enhancement Act”, which would permit U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Officers to be placed in U.S. diplomatic and consular posts in African nations in order to assist local wildlife rangers in the protection of elephants.

(10) Section 597 of H.R. 1735, the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016”, which would require directors of underperforming VA regional offices to explain why their regional office did not meet minimum national standards for claims processing and accuracy in a given year, describe what additional resources would be needed to meet such standards in the following year, and describe what new actions they will implement in response to their poor performance.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with you on behalf of the American people in the coming Congress.